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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development of a professional organization--the Inter-American Council on Educational Administration. The first half offers a descriptive summary of five professional associations, several of them serving members internationally. The second half of the paper summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of professional organizations and offers suggestions for solving problems that arise. The paper concludes that every successful organization has devised unique characteristics of structure and operation that are appropriate to its purposes, clients, and setting. (Author/LD)

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PROMISES AND PITFALLS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

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PROMISES AND PITFALLS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

I hope I may be forgiven for presenting a more personal statement than is usually my custom. I assume that I have been invited to make this presentation because of the variety of personal experiences I have had in the development of professional associations: I served for 5 years on the central staff of the University Council for Educational Administration, first as Associate Director and then as Deputy Director; I have been a Board Member of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration throughout the past 7 years, for 5½ of which I have been First Vice-President; I spent 4 years on the Board of Directors for the American Association of School Administrators' National Academy for School Executives; I was Chairman of the committee responsible for the Fourth Quadrennial International Inter-visitation Program in Educational Administration which was held in Canada, and I am currently Chairman of the IIP Standing Committee; and I was an originator of the Ontario Council for Leadership in Educational Administration in my own country, and am now involved in founding a Canada-wide council for leadership in educational administration. As a result of these experiences, I have encountered first-hand a number of the promises and pitfalls that attend the development of professional associations, and I want to share my views on some of these with you. So this will be an experience-based, practically-oriented presentation.

First, mainly for orientation purposes, I shall outline the nature of some of the professional associations with which I have been connected, commenting on certain of the major challenges with which I have seen each of them grapple. My experiences have led me to some observations which, on reflection, have yielded some general conclusions of a quite practical nature that I shall then present for your consideration as you embark on the exciting,

ambitious, and important mission of establishing an Inter-American Council on Educational Administration. In so doing, I shall deal initially with some of the promises in developing professional associations, and I shall then turn to certain potential pitfalls that can hinder such developments. I hope to conclude on an encouraging rather than a discouraging note.

The Nature and Challenges of some of the Professional Organizations with Which I Have Worked

What are some of the distinctive characteristics of professional organizations with which I have worked, what are some samples of major problems they have confronted, and what lessons have I learned from working with them? Let me address these questions briefly with reference to five associations.

The University Council for Educational Administration. A distinctive feature of UCEA is that it is a council of institutions rather than an association of individuals. Its membership consists of approximately 50 universities, three of which are in Canada and the remainder in the United States. Its primary mission is to improve advanced training in educational administration. Since training programs are institutional rather than individual entities, the institutional membership base of UCEA is crucial to the pursuit of its mission. While the knowledge and skills of individual professors can be improved through associations with individual membership, I do not believe that major advances in training programs can be achieved without institutional commitment.

Nevertheless, the extent to which an institution's programs benefit from the organization depends to some degree on the amount of involvement its individual professors have in the organization's work. And that involvement depends, in turn, on how closely projects of the professional organization mesh with interests of individuals in its member institutions. This situation has presented numerous challenges to UCEA, as reflected in the following questions: Since the interests of educational administration professors are very widespread

(and becoming increasingly so), which ones shall the professional organization select for special attention, and on what bases shall the selection be made? Because the choice inevitably results in different levels of involvement in the organization's activities by faculty in different member institutions, how can one justify charging the same basic membership fee to all universities in the Council? How can the organization "live with" the fact that some of its institutions view membership as an opportunity to contribute to the Council's major program development projects, while others view membership as a "contract" for benefits and services to themselves? Since the organization's major mission is to improve administrative preparation in universities, how can it justify an "elitist" approach to membership whereby only a small minority of leading universities qualify for admission -- and what should be the nature of the Council's relationship with non-member institutions that are also heavily into administrative preparation? Similarly, how can administrative practitioners in "the field" and their professional associations contribute, as they must, to the improvement of preparation programs when they are excluded from membership in the Council?

These questions reflect only a few of the important challenges UCEA has confronted over the years. It has, in my opinion, responded to them well through such mechanisms as enabling non-member institutions to benefit from its dissemination activities even though they cannot contribute to its developmental activities, by establishing the "Partnership" through which senior administrators in major school systems may participate directly in selected UCEA activities, and by taking the view that the potential benefits of membership are similar for all institutions, regardless of the size and interests of their faculty, and thus all should pay the same basic membership fee. These solutions, however, may not be applicable at all times or in all places and so any group considering the establishment of a professional organization after the model of UCEA must be prepared to grapple with challenges like those I have noted and many others.

The Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration. Unlike UCEA, the CCEA is an association of individuals. Membership is open to any who are interested in the advancement of educational administration as a field of study and practice, and it currently includes close to 4,000 scholars and practitioners from more than 20 countries in the Commonwealth of Nations (on which "the sun never sets"). Of necessity, because of its membership's worldwide distribution, developmental projects are extremely difficult for it to pursue and most of its activities fall within the dissemination category (publications, conferences, workshops, etc.). During the 9 years since it was established, CCEA has confronted a number of problems, among which the Executive Director, Harry Harris, has identified the following as major:

1. *Commitment -- It is very difficult for those in a given country to benefit from membership in CCEA unless they include one or more highly committed individuals who take proactive initiatives to ensure that the work and mission of the Council are aggressively pursued within the country concerned; without this, the benefits of membership are limited to little more than the receipt of periodical publications from the Council's headquarters.*
2. *Communication -- Beyond the common weaknesses of postal systems around the world, communication in an international organization such as CCEA is hindered by the immense cultural and language differences among its members; Mr. Harris states that he could make little progress in communications within CCEA until he began to physically visit the members in their various countries, with all of the demands on time and money that that entails.*
3. *Governance -- While a broadly international organization such as CCEA must obviously have a governing body that is widely representative of its various constituents, their world-wide distribution renders it highly*

expensive and inconvenient to enable such a body to function except at rare intervals; the Council's "solution" to this problem has been to limit the Board's role to the establishment of major policy and to delegate management responsibility to the Executive Director -- a compromise that is workable only when the Executive Director is of very high calibre.

4. *Local rules -- A major objective of CCEA is to stimulate the establishment of affiliated professional associations within the various countries of the Commonwealth; but different countries have different "rules" in regard to the creation of such organizations and the Council remains ignorant of these rules at its peril.*

5. *Finance -- While much optimism accompanies the establishment of a major international organization such as CCEA, it is essential that budgeting for it be highly realistic -- especially in times or settings characterized by general financial retrenchment, economic inflation, and decline in the proportion of funds available for education; Mr. Harris observes that "CCEA almost went to the wall because of an early failure to control expenditure coupled with a good deal of wishful thinking on membership growth rates."*

6. *Location of secretariat -- In an international organization, the choice of a site for the headquarters is inevitably a political one, and it is desirable to determine in advance whether or not the secretariat will rotate among the countries concerned or remain in a fixed location; beyond the political concerns are such practical issues as whether or not accommodation is available in institutions that are prepared to contribute space, staff, and services to help support the organization's operation.*

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the birth of an international professional organization, some of these issues surface and are best confronted in advance whereas others can be wisely deferred until the organization has had an opportunity to prove itself and become perceived as indispensable. It is important to know the difference from the beginning.

AASA's National Academy for School Executives. An association of professionals typically has two major purposes: improving the welfare of its members (salaries, benefits, security, working conditions, etc.) and advancing their professional development. The pursuit of these purposes involves different sets of priorities for association activity; membership welfare and professional development compete with each other for association resources, and they are often in conflict or even mutually contradictory. In part to help resolve this problem, the American Association of School Administrators established the National Academy for School Executives as its semi-autonomous professional development "arm," with its own Board of Directors which has delegated authority to establish policy and manage the operation of the Academy, although this Board is ultimately accountable to the AASA Executive Committee for its stewardship. Those planning the creation of any new professional association should decide in advance whether or not it will include membership welfare within its terms of reference and, if so, how the pursuit of this purpose will relate functionally to that of professional development.

The programing challenges faced by NASE derive largely from the expectation that it will address the current learning needs of AASA's immense membership (numbering close to 20,000 educational administrators). These challenges include:

1. Topics -- Administrators at different levels in different settings need help on different subjects; this necessitates an annual "needs survey" by the NASE staff and the provision of a large number of

programs on widely varying topics.

2. *Location -- A delicate balance must be found between the need for clients to have programs offered reasonably near their homes so that participation costs may be kept down and the desire of clients to attend programs in centres that are rich in recreational possibilities.*
3. *Format -- While some subjects cannot be dealt with effectively in periods of less than one week some clients cannot get free for periods of more than two days, and while some topics meet the needs of an overall majority of clients some particular client groups have critical needs that do not rank high in the preferences of a general majority; these circumstances have necessitated considerable variety in the format of NASE offerings which now include two-day institutes, one-week seminars, and targeted "contract" programs for particular agencies with unique learning needs.*

The experience of NASE demonstrates that a professional organization with a large and varied clientele must remain flexible in its programing.

The International Intervisitation Programs. The IIP's are quadrennial three-week programs during which leading scholars and practitioners of educational administration from many nations come together in a given country to examine educational administration and policy development in that country and to participate in an international forum for the exchange of ideas and the advancement of knowledge in educational administration. The first one, sponsored by UCEA, was held in the United States and Canada during 1966 and included leaders from the U.S. and the "old" Commonwealth countries; the second, held in Australia during 1970, added participants from the "new" Commonwealth countries, and saw the birth of CCEA; the third took place in Britain during 1974, was sponsored jointly by UCEA and CCEA, and included a few representatives from the European continent; and the fourth, again

sponsored by UCEA and CCEA, was held in Canada during 1978 and opened up participation to educational leaders in all countries (Benno Sander presented an excellent paper during the Conference Phase of that Program). One of the uniquely positive features of the IIP's is that responsibility for planning them has rested entirely with committed professionals in the respective host countries, thereby avoiding some of the dysfunctional political and diplomatic problems that would have arisen had responsibility been vested in governments. However, now that the IIP's have become regular events, the need for some continuity among them has become apparent; and since participation in them has become world-wide, such continuity cannot be provided by the joint sponsorship of UCEA and CCEA alone. Accordingly, an IIP Standing Committee has been established, with representatation not only from UCEA and CCEA constituents but from other parts of the world as well.

Among the lessons learned from the IIP experiences to date are:

1. While recognizing that governments have a legitimate interest in the conduct of the Programs and that they must be aware of them (especially when they are held in their own countries), their involvement should be kept at "arm's length" and the "high profile" role should be taken by the professionals in educational administration. (It must also be recognized that the appropriate balancing point in this regard will of necessity vary from one country to another.)
2. The country hosting an IIP must have some organization for planning and running the Program; if such an organization does not exist in advance, then it must be created at least as a temporary system.
3. New lessons are learned each time an IIP is held, and since each one takes place in a different country and is the responsibility of those in the host country, it is essential that some continuing mechanism be established to provide liaison among those in one

host country and those in the next so that the lessons learned need not be repeated.

A major challenge facing International Intervisitation Programs in the future will be the finding of an appropriate balance between this need for continuity and organization, on the one hand, and the highly prized informality and spontaneity that have contributed so much to the success of the IIP's to date, on the other hand.

The Ontario Council for Leadership in Educational Administration. OCLEA is a professional development organization within Canada's province of Ontario. It was established as a cooperative, involving all of the organizations in the province that are concerned with the professional development of educational administrators -- government ministries, professional associations, trustees' councils, and universities; and it reflected the conviction that, rather than have several organizations trying to achieve similar purposes independently (and in each case with a motivation that was secondary to other more primary concerns of each organiation), it is better to have these organizations cooperate with one another through a council which takes the professional development of educational administrators as its primary and only mission. OCLEA publishes a periodical journal, offers a number of seminars and workshops each year, seeks to stimulate the improvement of preparation programs in educational administration, and makes a conscious effort to relate theory and practice. Its "members" are not individuals, but agencies and associations comprised of the individuals to be served. One of its major challenges has been to avoid duplicating or competing with the programs of its constituent organizations and, instead, to strengthen and coordinate the professional development activities of those organizations.

Like UCEA, it has learned that more dramatic improvements can be made through institutional than through individual membership. Like CCEA, it has

learned that participant commitment is essential to its success; each of its member groups must feel a sense of "ownership" if they are to contribute meaningfully to and benefit significantly from the Council's operations. Like NASE, it has learned that the professional development function of an association can be effectively pursued when that function is divorced from other, perhaps higher-priority, activities of the association. And like the IIP's, it has learned that (at least in Canada) professional development is more effective when its leadership comes from the profession itself than when it is abandoned to government control. OCLEA's major problems have been financial, and its survival has demonstrated the importance of external funding in the early years of a professional organization -- a phenomenon that is characteristic of all the associations I have discussed.

We are now seeking to build upon the success of the OCLEA experience by developing a Canada-wide network of similar organizations in various regions of the country. While this development will benefit from the learnings we gained through the OCLEA experience, we must be prepared to confront additional challenges related to the immense size and relatively sparse population of Canada, the jealously guarded provincial sovereignty in Canadian education, and the variability of readiness among constituents in different parts of the country. In addressing these concerns, we shall exploit some exciting opportunities to utilize some rather advanced communications technologies, and we hope that this will result in some new learnings that will be of benefit to professional organizations operating in the international domain.

In recounting rather randomly some of my experiences with professional organizations in the field of educational administration, I hope I have indicated that there is a wide variety of "models" that should be considered by anyone endeavouring to establish a new professional organization, that

much has been learned from previous developments that need not be re-learned in the future, and that each professional organization which is successful has devised unique characteristics of structure and operation that are particularly appropriate to its purposes, clients, and setting. An important challenge confronting the developers of the Inter-American Council on Educational Administration is to distinguish between those lessons from others' experiences that are applicable to this development and those characteristics of purpose, client, and setting that require a unique response within the inter-American context.

Having selectively summarized my own experiences with the development of certain professional organizations in educational administration, let me now try to synthesize, from those experiences, some general observations about the promises and pitfalls of professional association development.

The Promises of Professional Associations

It may be rather presumptuous of me to speak to you about the promises of professional associations; after all, if you were not aware of them -- if you were not excited by them -- you probably wouldn't be here, since our purpose is to help launch such an organization. Nevertheless, let me risk reminding you of a few of them.

I think some of the promises of professional associations in general are well summarized by three adages (or popular sayings) in the English language:

1. "There is strength in numbers" -- A group of professionals may achieve more by combining their voices into a single clarion call than by crying independently as isolated voices in the wilderness. This is true politically, for example, when there is a need to influence external governmental agents on whose decisions the individual members or the profession as a whole depend; the opportunity to "divide and conquer" individual professionals or small groups is eliminated by a strong

professional association. It is also true economically, in that a professional association usually has better access to external funding than do individual professionals acting independently; and an association of professionals provides a broader base for internal funding and more efficiency in expenditures than is possible for professionals acting separately. And it is true programatically, in that the breadth and depth of talent available through an association to any member far exceed his own resources; similarly, since leadership is not a finite quantity, the amount and quality of leadership are extended by the association of professionals.

2. "Misery loves company" -- All professionals face problems. Through association, they may gain some respite by sharing their ordeals with similarly beleaguered individuals, and they may provide mutual reinforcement to one another's efforts at overcoming adversity. Professional associations provide opportunities for the strong to support the weak and they provide legitimation for professionally sound actions that may not be popular outside of the profession.

4. "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts" -- The centralized component of a professional association (i.e., the leaders of the collectivity) can usually see both problems and solutions in broader perspective than can any component unit (which, almost by definition, has a more restricted view of the profession's concerns). The collectivity, through its leadership, can stimulate and legitimate and in other ways support the activities of those in component units, thereby providing motivation and direction beyond the capacity of any single member. And the leadership of a collectivity can focus, coordinate, and facilitate member activities so that complementary and supplementary resources are combined to effect greater impact

than any component unit could achieve by acting alone; gaps can be filled and duplications avoided; the same mistakes need not be made twice, nor must the wheel be reinvented by each member.

Beyond these rather rational advantages of associations, there are more affective benefits such as the professional cohesiveness generated by the excitement that surrounds the creation of something new and needed; I well remember the almost breathless anticipation, the intoxicating rush of ideas and events, during the periods leading up to the establishment of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and the Ontario Council for Leadership in Educational Administration. Related to this is the pride and feeling of legitimacy that come with the decisions of external agencies to provide the necessary start-up funds for the establishment of professional associations, and also with the endorsements of moral support from important fellow organizations in other parts of the world (such as the University Council for Educational Administration).

With specific reference to the Inter-American Council on Educational Administration, I think there is exciting promise in its proposed comprehensiveness. Its objectives are ambitious, including as they do the professional development of educational leaders, the enhancement of training capacities in institutions, and the improvement of educational policy and policy-making. The wide scope of these objectives bodes well for the organization's chances of avoiding the traditional separation of scholars and practitioners in educational administration and the frequent isolation of professionals in educational administration from governmental policy-makers and from professionals in necessarily related fields of endeavour such as community development. Consequently, it is not unrealistic to hope that the Council will contribute to effective coordination of planning, policy development, and administration activities -- not only within education, but between education and other social services as well.

This is a promising prospect indeed, and it could become a unique distinction of the Inter-American Council on Educational Administration.

Potential Pitfalls of Which Those in the Inter-American Council Must Be Aware

Pitfalls usually result from problems that are not anticipated or for which solutions have not been planned soon enough. The vastness, in both territory and mission, of the Inter-American Council on Educational Administration portends a number of potential problems that must be prepared for. Let me suggest just a few of them:

1. Multiple goals and multiple constraints -- With a large number and variety of sponsors, funders, members, and clients, it is inevitable that there will be differing expectations of what the Council is supposed to do; these expectations may often compete with each other and they may at times be conflicting and mutually contradictory Moreover, there will be expectations by clients and members of what the Council should not do, and there may well be constraints placed on what the Council can do by certain of its sponsors and funders; it is quite possible that the constraints established by one source may prevent the Council from meeting the expectations held by another. If these problems are to be ameliorated, careful planning and advance agreements will need to be achieved through answering questions such as: How much professional autonomy and flexibility are we prepared to forfeit in order to gain desired sponsorship and needed funding? Will there be differences between our members and our clients, between our sponsors and our funders? Will the basis of membership be individual, institutional, organizational, governmental, or some combination -- and if there is to be a combination, what distinction will there be in the costs and benefits for different membership entities? Will membership be open or selective -- and if selective,

on the basis of what criteria? What role will governments and other politically-oriented bodies play in determining what the Council does -- and how will this relate to the role played by educational administration professionals? (This issue becomes particularly complex when several levels of government are involved, and even more so where numerous countries and different global regions are concerned.) To what extent will the Council be dependent on external agencies for financial support, how will this relate to the level of internally-generated funding, and what expectation is there that the balance between external and internal financing will shift over time? All of these questions have implications for the goals and activities of the Council, for they concern whose needs will be addressed, what priorities will be established among numerous possible objectives, and which operational strategies will be employed in the developmental, dissemination, or other modes.

2. *Centralization and decentralization in governance and participation -- A professional association by definition includes both a central coordinating agency and a decentralized body of members or clients. The division of labour and responsibility between these two levels is crucial; it may also be particularly complex in the Inter-American Council because of the possibility that intermediate layers of organization may emerge or already exist at the national or regional level. Among the questions that must be answered in responding to this problem are: Who shall govern the Council and how shall they be chosen? Where shall the secretariat be located and how shall it be staffed? Will the duties of officials at the headquarters be primarily to provide leadership in the initiation of Council activities or to provide coordinative and other services in response to initiatives generated decentrally? Answers to questions such as these will have*

a strong bearing on the role of the Council's governing body and the qualifications of its staff.

3. Differences among participants' cultural, political, and social contexts -- The probable scope of the Inter-American Council's operation will encompass a vast array of members and clients -- including highly industrialized and less developed nations, urban and rural communities, dominant and minority ethnic populations, socialistic and capitalistic systems, democracies and dictatorships, etc. There will be differences in the economic structures and resource bases in different parts of the Council's domain, and there will be differences in the nature and roles of various social, political, and educational institutions. Value systems will vary significantly and so, too, will aspirations. These differences will generate widely divergent needs and expectations for the Inter-American Council. I do not believe the Council can possibly meet all of these needs and expectations. Accordingly, choices will have to be made and the probable costs of these choices to the Council (in terms of political, financial, and moral support) will have to be carefully projected. Also, in serving different cultural, political, and social constituencies, care must be taken to avoid the impression of status differentials; while there will be donor and receiver systems in conducting the Council's work, it must be manifestly recognized that all systems have something to give and all have something to get as the Council pursues its ambitious mission.

4. Professionally-oriented distinctions -- Substantial differences related to the study and practice of educational administration among participating groups must also be accommodated in the programs of the Council. Vast variations will be found in the levels of academic

and professional sophistication of participants as reflected, for example, in their recognition of educational administration as a profession, as a field of scholarly study, as an area of practical endeavour distinct from teaching, and as an arena for basic and applied research. There will also be differences in the stages of development reached by professional associations in various parts of the Council's domain. And more fundamentally, participants will vary widely in their views about the roles of schools and universities, about the relationships of educational institutions to governments, and about the very purposes of learning and education. A major implication of these differences is that some Council activities designed for participants in certain contexts will be totally irrelevant to those in other settings because they are based on assumptions about educational administration that are simply not applicable across the entire domain of the Council. This means that similar objectives will have to be pursued in entirely different ways if the Council hopes to meet the needs of any substantial proportion of its constituents. The complexity and sheer quantity of programing, staffing, and financing that will be required boggle the mind.

5. Challenges in communication -- Communication, which Harry Harris identifies as the major challenge in the development of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration, will be even more problematic in the Inter-American Council because it cannot be assumed in the latter case that English is a common language. Consequently, the need for translation services and simultaneous interpretation arises, along with all of the costs that such provisions entail.

6. Jurisdictional concerns -- As with the Commonwealth Council and the Ontario Council for Leadership in Educational Administration, the

Inter-American Council will be perceived in some settings as a supra-system. Its role and work must be carefully articulated with those of already existing national or regional professional associations in educational administration in order to ensure that the Inter-American Council not only draws on but also contributes to their strengths; should it be perceived as competing or conflicting with their activities and missions, should they view it as a threat to their own survival, then it will encounter opposition and rejection with the result that its full inter-American potential will remain unrealized. This is an extremely sensitive issue and will require great diplomacy and delicacy on the part of Council leaders.

These problems are not insurmountable, though, and I am confident that your leaders have already anticipated most of them and plan solutions to them.

Conclusion

Let me conclude on this optimistic note. While you must beware of pitfalls such as those I have mentioned, do not be discouraged by them. They are dangers signs, not stop signs; they are there to challenge you, not to destroy you. Your hard work and creative initiative will enable you to avoid or surmount them, as others have done before you. And it will be worth it, for remember the promises! Your major challenge will be to accommodate the immense diversity within the vast inter-American constituency. But keep in mind another adage in the English language: "There can be unity in diversity." That is, the conditions that cause your most vexing problems may also serve to unite you, to stimulate your greatest successes, and to establish your unique and distinctive leadership role among other international councils in the field of educational administration.

I hope that this will be the case and, speaking for your colleagues in Canada and on behalf of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration,

I wish you every success in your important and ambitious work. More personally, as a resident of the Americas myself, I hope that I shall have an opportunity to help with the development of the Inter-American Council on Educational Administration.